

# Zingerman's®

#279 July–August 2020

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stay safe! have fun!

# TURNING CHALLENGES INTO CREATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

**IN OUR THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS** in business at Zingerman's, we've worked through a whole bunch of challenges. Inflation, deflation. Severe unemployment and staffing shortages. 9/11. Stock market crashes. Interpersonal conflicts and inner conflicts of our own. Oil prices, beef prices, milk prices, and gas prices have all risen dramatically and later fallen; and then risen and fallen again. The dot-com boom. And bust.

The marketplace has changed markedly. Personal computers came on the scene. Cell phones. Websites. Online ordering. Social media. Even after that long—and very incomplete—list, this is our first global pandemic. Best I can tell, there's no quick way out of the situation in which we all find ourselves.

This is the first challenge that every single organization in the world is struggling with at the same time. Usually while we're down, someone else is up. Problems in the past have been connected to a specific industry, geographical area, or a political change in a particular country. But in this case, the whole world got punched in the gut at pretty much the same time. And all of us, everywhere, are struggling to catch our breath and figure out how to get back on our feet.

So, while we're waiting for someone out there to announce some successes in terms of cures or vaccines—it will probably be a while, I know—what are we going to do in the meantime here at Zingerman's? The popular answer, I think, would probably be to quickly lay out a straightforward 10-point plan. A clear program that will neatly address every issue with near-perfect, creative solutions that fix all of our problems. But the real answer is, I don't exactly know. I've been reading and writing a lot about humility over the last year, and that work reminds me regularly that while saying, "I don't know"—when that is indeed the truth—may not be easy, but it's important.

Does that mean we're clueless? Of course not. We've gotten this far, right? We don't have a concise plan, but we do have a fairly extensive, well-tested, and relatively successful organizational philosophy to fall back on and upon which we will build the strategies to help get us through this crazy time. I do believe that we're going to get through this and come out the other side. Still smarting, but relative to how bad things could have been, we'll be ok.

In the moment, we will do what I believe we do best. Work caringly. Work collaboratively. Work creatively. Share information with staff, suppliers, and customers. Get help from anyone who's willing to give it. Experiment liberally. Learn from mistakes and hope a few good things stick. Continue to be an open book management business so everyone here knows the financial situation and can be a part of the solution. Stay true to our vision and our values. Live our mission as best we can every minute of every day. Treat everyone we interact with, everywhere, with dignity. Work hard to be better listeners. Bring that good listening, and a lot of love, to all we do. Help those who have less. Share what we have. Focus on flavor, giving great service, and making Zingerman's a positive place for people to work. Look to the long term while making the most of every moment. Appreciate the heck out of everyone and everything we come into contact with. Stick with positive beliefs even if so many others opt for something more cynical. Show love and care in all we do.

Even just writing all those things out re-inspires me to keep at it and stick with this process for the long haul. Part of my own self-management has been to try to slow down. To find ways to re-ground when most of the world feels frenetic. To take time to talk, to collaborate, and to let ideas come to the fore. To keep journaling and jogging. To keep cooking and conversing. To stay connected when my fear makes me want to flee. None of that, by the way, is unique to this year. It's universal. It's timeless.

Whether or not there is merit to this more mindful approach, only time will tell. In the first week or so I felt like we were on the verge of drowning in the deluge. We weren't. But it sure felt that way for a few days. Of course, when you're thrown overboard, the worst thing you can do is flail pointlessly. It wastes energy

and actually increases the odds of drowning. Yes, there is a crisis to be dealt with. And we must move to address needed changes pretty quickly.

Over the last few months, I've started to shift my frame of reference. While I can't guarantee 100 percent that we'll successfully get through all of this, I believe strongly that we will. As the weeks pass, I've worked to slow down my mind. It's a bit of what famous quarterbacks always seem to say—they can see the play unfold downfield as if it were happening in slow motion. This situation, I've come to believe, is much the same. It's not a sprint in which our business will be first to find the elusive gold nugget in the river. Instead, I would now suggest, this is a marathon through a minefield. It is not, as it's being marketed in some places, a race to figure out the one "right answer." While quick fixes might turn out well, I believe the better answers will come from taking time to reflect and, together, come up with grounded, solid approaches. Preferably, more than one approach, since much of what we try won't work.

At least for my own frame of reference, I've started to position all of this as an opportunity to collaboratively and caringly rebuild our ecosystem. While yes, "everything will be different," it's a great time to be open to new ideas while still staying true to who we are. It's time to focus on the values and practices that reinforce the ethical principles that got us here. Let's stick together, keep learning, and be mindful, generous, creative, and collaborative, while watching the numbers and managing accordingly. It won't be easy, but it will work out.

As I mentioned a few months ago, I love this quote from Neil Gaiman "Our stories will outlive us. Let's make them good."

As I write this, we're midway through month three of what many of us at Zingerman's have begun referring to as AC (After Coronavirus). Clearly the pandemic has presented enormous challenges for personal health and safety, led to a great deal of unexpected illness and loss, and put huge pressure on healthcare workers.

Here in the ZCoB, we've continued to push ahead. By the time you read this, restaurant dining rooms will have partially reopened, but as of right now we still have limited ability to serve you as we have for so long. I'll skip including too many details since it's inevitable that between the time I send this in for edits and the time you read it, about 188 things will have happened to alter the situation.

While our local community continues to pay the price of the tragic reality of the continuing coronavirus pandemic, positive work has emerged—and continues to emerge by the day—around the edges, even in our current state of emergency.

Musician Jim White wrote, "Sometimes tribulation forces buried treasure to the surface." For me, it's been encouraging to watch what's happening in our highly imperfect, but culturally healthy organization (finances are another story—it's hard to drop to half of your normal sales without significant negative impact). It's been an inspiration to watch—and taste and experience—the creative and innovative ideas that have been implemented here in the ZCoB over the last few months. Thanks to everyone in the ZCoB who's worked so hard to put them together. And thank you to everyone—staff, customers, and suppliers—for staying positive, appreciative, kind, and creative through this whole I-don't-think-I'd-want-to-go-through-this-again social version of a polar vortex. And thank you so much for sticking with us, and for your patience and support! It means the world! I feel fortunate to be part of such a great community, both within our organization, in the Ann Arbor-Ypsi area, and in our community of friends, colleagues, and customers across the country and around the world.

What follows are some of the innovative new introductions that have happened across the ZCoB over the last few months. By the time you read this, I'm confident there will be others as well. If you want to keep up with current ZCoB events, sign up for the weekly Top 5 enews I write at [zingermanscommunity.com](http://zingermanscommunity.com).

Be safe! One way or another, I hope to see you soon!

Ari

new!

## NEW HANDMADE ARTISAN CHEESES

Back at the beginning of the year—which now feels like it was about 50 years ago—we started developing two new cheeses at the Creamery. We thought our timing would be ideal. We thought we'd introduce them in mid- to late-March when sales start to pick up in the spring and people are thinking about entertaining for Easter and Passover. This year, that's not exactly the way it played out. Pandemics, it turns out, override the best-laid plans of mice, men, and cheesemakers. Nevertheless, we now have these great new cheeses for you! A tasty new Mini Brie and an absinthe-washed-rind cheese named Water Hill.

### Classic Mini Brie

A little made-in-Michigan version of this longtime French classic

Locals have long been after us to come up with our own version of a bloomy rind, Brie-type cheese. And now, I'm happy to say, we have one! Our Mini Brie's first few months have gone well—even in the rather surreal scenscape of pandemic retailing.

The cheese was crafted at the Creamery by Monsieur Jules Mons, who grew up in the cheese world in France. His family has been in cheese maturing and retailing since the 1950s—he has known Brie since he was old enough to eat solid food. The background? "Parisian people going to Normandy discovered the amazing camembert there," Jules explained. "It was impossible to travel quickly from Normandy to Paris back in those days. So they asked Parisian cheesemakers to make a Camembert-style. Because the Parisian market was feeding a lot more people than in the Normandy countryside, they decided to make a 'big Camembert' and the Brie was born." This "Mini Brie," then, is a return to the smaller size cheesemakers in central France would have been making back in the day!

How is it made? We start with fresh cow's milk, which we gently pasteurize. The Creamery crew adds starter cultures and then lets the milk set up. The next day, rennet is added and the milk is warmed. When the curd sets, it's cut, stirred, and hand-ladled into molds. From there, it drains for about 18 hours and is turned every few hours to keep the moisture evenly distributed. We wrap it and then let it ripen so that the white mold forms a crust on the outside, and the curd on the inside begins to soften. It's important to note what's not in the cheese—unlike many modern Bries, we're not adding any stabilizers. All of which leads up to the most important part of this new, born-in-a-pandemic, product—the first batches have been impressively good! Buttery, mushroomy, almost meaty in the finish, they're the perfect pairing for the great French baguettes the Bakehouse crew just up the block bakes each morning. Delicious with fresh apples or pears, and a good match for walnuts, hazelnuts, or almonds.

It is important to know that—like old-school Brie from past centuries—because they're made without stabilizers, when they get ripe, the cheeses will run. The delicious paste will flow out from between the crust. Jules told me, "As we say in France, they run after the bread." I love the image and the flavor, both. Come by the Cream Top Shop this week and pick up one of these new Classic Mini Bries! Or visit [zingermans.com](http://zingermans.com) to ship one to your friend who used to live in France!

### Water Hill Cheese

A wonderful new washed-rind cheese

"Wow!" is the first word I can think of with this great new cheese. Pretty much everyone that I've talked to who's tried it, loves it. We sold 10 of them at the Cream Top Shop the first day we put them out for sale!

The Water Hill is a washed-rind cheese—made a bit in the style of a French Époisses—but it's a cheese all its own. Fresh milk is gently pasteurized, then starter cultures are added along with rennet to set the curd. After the curd sets, it's cut, then ladled into small molds where it's drained for a couple of days, being turned regularly for even maturing. We salt the young cheeses for a day and then, on Day 4, start washing them with the wonderful Water Hill Absinthe from Ann Arbor Distilling Company.

Absinthe is one of the most famous liqueurs in history. It originated in Switzerland in the late 18th century, and in the 19th and early 20th centuries became the toast of the literary crowd in Paris. If you don't know it, it's an anise-flavored spirit that's made from grand wormwood, green anise, sweet fennel, and a host of other herbs. Over the years, it has been portrayed as a dangerous and addictive substance, and was banned in many countries, including the U.S., for decades. But in the 1990s, absinthe started its comeback as medical studies found there was nothing innately harmful about it. The folks at Ann Arbor Distillery started making their absinthe here a few years ago, using local botanicals like hops, linden, and elderflower along with the classic wormwood and fennel.

The flavor of the cheese has a little bit of the punch of other washed-rind cheeses, but it's much mellower than most. It seems to be great with most everything. Fruit for sure. Walnut Sage bread from the Bakehouse. Country Miche. A baguette. Paesano bread! It's nice next to a salad. Stop in or call ahead to order from the Cream Top Shop and we'll bring Water Hill Cheese to your car!



new!

## ZINGTRAIN UNVEILS VIRTUAL TRAINING

WHEN ITS NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED training seminars were shut down, ZingTrain shifted quickly to produce a series of virtual live training sessions for progressive organizations across the country. Early indicators have been positive—clients are signing up quickly, from nearly every state. Katie Frank, co-managing partner of ZingTrain, says, "The virtual trainings have turned out to make it easier for business owners to 'send' more staff—they save on the cost of travel so they're eager to invest smaller sums in the effective training and education for their teams." Katie's co-managing partner and ZingTrain founder, Maggie Bayless, added, "It's been very gratifying to find that some clients who had in-person trainings scheduled were very eager to know if we could now do those same workshops virtually. Thanks to the breakout room capability of Zoom, we've been able to replicate the small group interactivity that is a hallmark of ZingTrain's training style. One of the biggest things we've learned is that virtual workshops need to be quite a bit shorter. The content is solid, so it's really about rethinking the design to accommodate a virtual session."

The good news is that the sessions have been really well received—comments like, "It was wonderful to get together and work with you through the vision for and steps to create and maintain great customer service. I agree that the session felt

extremely interactive, respectful, and comfortable as well as engaging," have been coming in regularly. ZingTrain fans, and readers of the *Guide to Good Leading* books around the world, are happy that they can increase their learning without having to deal with intercontinental travel.

One ZingTrain teaching session that's really getting a lot of attention is "How to Build Hope in Business." Both in the form of "keynote conversations" to address larger groups (like one we did "in" Pittsburgh in May) or in the form of shorter, smaller classes, hope has been the "hot topic" for ZingTrain. It's not hard to understand why—in the middle of a pandemic, many people's hope levels have dropped. But as we know, higher hope correlates with better health, better emotional resilience, lower turnover, stronger leadership, better learning. Lower hope, conversely, leads to the opposite. There's much more on the subject in Secrets #44 and #45 in Part 4 of the *Zingerman's Guide to Good Leading* series, *The Power of Beliefs in Business*. Peggy Kornegger, an anarchist from a small town in

Illinois, writes, "I do believe that what we all need, what we absolutely require, in order to continue struggling . . . is HOPE, that is, a vision of the future so beautiful and so powerful that it pulls us steadily forward. . . . If we abandon hope . . . then we have already lost."



# CUP OR BOWL? FAVORITE SOUPS FROM THE ZINGERMAN'S BAKEHOUSE KITCHEN

*A handy new cookbooklet serves as a happy guide to Bakehouse soups*

**MY GOOD FRIEND** Molly Stevens once wrote: “Long ago I worked as the lunch cook at a lively little café in Montpelier, Vermont, and every day meant coming up with a new soup du jour. I was relatively green and had no formal training, and I struggled to continually invent new combinations. At night, I would scour my meager cookbook collection for recipes I could master (this was long before Google), and the next morning I’d do my best to interpret these into something our customers might enjoy.” If Molly had had a copy of this great new “cookbooklet,” *Cup or Bowl?*, from the Bakehouse, her life would have been a lot easier. It all worked out for her, though, as Molly is an award-winning author and internationally-known cooking teacher.

Interestingly, I had pretty much the same experience in the kitchen. Some of the first dishes I made when I began cooking professionally at Maude’s, a now-closed Ann Arbor restaurant, back in the day, were soups. There’s something about making soup—combining different ingredients, various spices, cooking longer or shorter, tasting for spices and then adjusting, adding fat, reducing down, or lightening up with lemon . . . that made a special place for soup making in my line cook’s heart. Soups have a way of sticking with us; they help us feel grounded, which makes this new little book by the Bakehouse is timelier than ever. As Abraham Maslow, known for his work in psychology, not his cooking, once said: “A first-rate soup is more creative than a second-rate painting.” Makes me wonder where he’d put soup on his hierarchy of needs?

The Bakehouse is incredibly well-known for bread and pastries. Locals buy them in abundance and we ship loads of baked goods around the country through Zingerman’s Mail Order. The bread and pastry are what bring people into the Bakeshop out on Plaza Drive, but a lot of what keeps many of our regulars coming back are the soups, salads, and sandwiches that the Bakehouse’s savory kitchen crew puts together so diligently every day. This new little book, *Cup or Bowl?*, is an homage to the Bakehouse’s soup squad. Like the Bakeshop, where we serve the soups, this book is small but packed with lots of great looking, and great tasting treats—52 pages that include a bit of personal insight, history, and 15 soup recipes, plus four recipes for stocks.



**new!**

Backing up a bit, soups were not part of the original Bakehouse project when we got going in 1992. They came along about 10 years later. As co-managing partner Amy Emberling writes in the foreword:

“We were challenged to satisfy our guests but stick to our vision. Frank Carollo, Bakehouse managing partner, came up with the idea of serving a couple of hot soups every day. Why? Because bread and soup are a natural pair. It made sense. We’d serve soup and give guests a piece of bread to enjoy with it. All these years later, the tradition has continued.”

**Just a few of the great soups to get around the ZCoB this summer**

**BAKEHOUSE**

Persian Chicken  
Turkey Urfa Chile

**DELI**

Chicken Broth with either noodles, matzo balls, or rice  
Cold Bulgarian Cucumber

**ROADHOUSE**

Ancho Beef Chuck Chile  
Southwestern Vegetable

**MISS KIM**

Chilled Cucumber and Seaweed  
Summer Squash and Kale Doenjang



The book’s recipes give you the chance to reproduce the Bakehouse’s classic soup repertoire at your house. It’s a handy home guide and a great little gift. Buy two and gift one; buy 10 and send them around the country to share a taste of our town. I know I’m going to send one to Molly. My guess is that you’ll still want to come by the Bakehouse regularly to buy a bowl—especially in these summer months when you can sit outside in the sun and grab some bread and pastry in the process.

Author Willa Cather once referenced a great onion soup in one of her novels, writing, “A soup like this is not the work of one man. It is the result of a constantly refined tradition. There are nearly a thousand years of history in this soup.” So too, there’s the work of thousands of ZCoBbers and 38 years of organizational history in every page and every recipe in this wonderful little book. And a whole lot of love—both yours and ours—in every bite of the soups you’ll make from the recipes. Thanks to everyone at the Bakehouse for putting it together and for sharing their soup stories with the world!

## ZINGSHARE: A FLAVORFUL NEW EXPERIMENT FOR THE TIMES

*A weekly curated box of Zingerman’s goodies from our various businesses*

**ONE OF THE FIRST** culinary “losses” for me when the pandemic hit was the closure of the Ann Arbor Farmers Markets. To fill in, my partner Tammie and I became regular buyers of Tantre Farms’ “Immunity Share”—a weekly box they put together while the Shelter-in-Place order was in effect, featuring their own produce and the work of a series of other local farms and artisans (including cheese from the Creamery).

As is often the case, one good idea begets another. One evening, Tammie connected the dots: “Maybe you guys should do a Zingerman’s box?” It seemed obvious in hindsight. One of the good things that happens in crises—which I’m definitely not saying balances out the bad—is that new ideas move forward much more quickly. In about 10 days, we went from idea to implementation, coordinating half a dozen different Zingerman’s businesses to organize the debut of ZingShare.

Every week, we gather up offerings from the Bakehouse, Deli, Creamery, Coffee, Roadhouse, Cornman Farms, Candy Company, and Miss Kim. We carefully pack them into one big box, along with a surprise or two. Our guests pick it up, unpack, and eat well all week. To order one up, visit [zcob.me/zingshare](http://zcob.me/zingshare). It’s that easy! You can also order the box for local delivery to get it brought right to your door! Each week we alter the offerings—full of flavorful, traditional foods!

**Order today at [zcob.me/zingshare](http://zcob.me/zingshare)!**

**new!**



# MISO BUTTER SAUCE FROM MISS KIM

A scrumptious sauce you can put to work in wonderfully easy ways

**LOOKING FOR** an easy way to make your home cooking more interesting? Miso butter sauce from Miss Kim is a wonderful option—you can order it up every day of the week from Miss Kim's kitchen, and it's easy to put to work in yours. It's a staff favorite and one of managing partner and chef Ji Hye Kim's most compelling go-to sauces:

"At Miss Kim, we use a variety of fermented sauces and pastes. They're like magic potions packed with flavor—secret weapons for anyone who fancies themselves a good cook. We have what we call three Korean mother sauces: Korean soy sauce (ganjang), soy paste (doenjang), and chili paste (gochujang). Then we have fermented fish sauces: fermented anchovy sauce (myulchijut), fermented sand lance fish sauce (kanarijut), and fermented tiny whole shrimp (saewoojut). And last, but not least, we also have miso, fermented Japanese soy paste."

Ji Hye's not the only one who loves miso. Sarah Jampel sang its praises in *Bon Appétit* 14 months before this pandemic set in: "Salty, earthy, and funky, miso is the fermented, versatile ingredient that we put in everything from pasta salad to apple pie."

Ji Hye continues:

"Have you seen the Netflix show and the cookbook by Samin Nosrat called *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat*? Samin's premise is that these four things—salt, fat, acid, and heat—are the elements of good cooking. It's a succinct and skillful way of looking at cooking. The fermented sauces (like fish sauces and soy pastes) are basically the element of salt. They bring deeper savoriness and complexity to each dish. The only thing is that for a novice, it may be slightly tricky to use as the saltiness and the flavor can be quite intense. A good beginner sauce to bring "salt" would be miso. Here we use shiro miso, or white miso. It's sort of a milder cousin of the robust and rustic Korean doenjang. Because it's a bit less salty than doenjang and a bit rounder too, white miso is easier to play with and to incorporate into different dishes across cuisines, even in baking (think salty chocolate chip cookies or salty butter-scotch bars)."

Now, to be upfront about all this, I'm relatively new to cooking with miso. So if you're like me, take note of what Ji Hye said: like a roux in Louisiana, the darker the miso, the bigger the flavor. Miso can move from white to yellow to red—all the way on to the biggest flavor, black miso. The lighter the miso, the less fermentation time, and a higher ratio of other grains like rice, barley, or soybeans. The white miso in the miso butter at Miss Kim is, as Ji Hye has said, is on the mellower end of the spectrum.

"One great example of how we use it is our miso butter. Butter certainly does

not have a very long tradition in Korea, only having been brought into the country mostly after the Korean War. But that doesn't mean butter is not well embraced. People quickly found out that fermented soy sauces and pastes are delicious paired with butter. In fact, pairing a dairy product with a fermented sauce can be quite tasty. One of my favorite childhood meals is soy butter rice with an egg on top. Korean teenagers often enjoy melted mozzarella on tteokbokki, made extra spicy with more gochujang and chili flakes. It was popularized in the U.S. by chef David Chang at his Momofuku restaurants. We pair the amazing local unsalted Calder Dairy butter with the white miso for its versatility and mildness, as well as for its lack of gluten.

Miso butter is great. (It is super easy to make—take 2 parts good unsalted butter and 1 part white miso, fold into each other until uniform in a mixing bowl at room temperature.) It keeps well in the fridge.

It's amazing on most things, but especially on vegetables. So good that we have it all year at Miss Kim to serve on seasonal vegetables—asparagus and soft egg during spring; zucchini and pepitas during summer; slender Asian eggplants during late summer; butternut squash with toasted nuts during winter. At home, I spoon it over hot rice or noodles with a good pinch of black pepper for a quick and easy meal, like grown-up buttered noodles."

As per what Ji Hye has said, miso—and miso butter—are, like a great olive oil, best when added at the end of the cooking (too much cooking will kill the microorganisms active in the fermentation that help make it so magical). In addition to all those great ideas she just gave you, you can put it on green beans (corn when it comes in later this summer), or potatoes. It would be good on farina and terrific melted over just-cooked fish. You could put it on toast under a pile of sautéed fresh spinach or zucchini. Ji Hye adds:

"With our dining room closed and everyone spending more time at home, we've made some of our prepared sauces available for purchase and the fermented sauces make a prominent appearance. Along with the tteokbokki sauce (made with gochujang and used for our popular Street Style Tteokbokki and all our Bibimbob) and the galbi marinade (made with our house soy sauce, a wonderful marinade for meat, firm tofu, and vegetables), miso butter is on the menu and definitely one you should try. Go get it!"

Miso butter really can work magic in the kitchen! Kristie Brablec, managing partner at Zingerman's Food Tours, shared the other evening: "Miss Kim helped make dinner so exciting tonight. I can't believe I have miso butter in the fridge! I'm freakin' out!"



## PIT SMOKED WHOLE CHICKENS FROM THE ROADHOUSE

A great meal to grab any evening!

**HERE'S AN EXCEPTIONAL** take-out meal for you! A whole Amish chicken, rubbed with salt and our freshly ground Tellicherry black pepper, smoked slowly on the pit over smoldering whole oak logs for about three or four hours. The Roadhouse crew puts a bit of butter on top of the bird, then wraps it really well in foil so you can get it home in good shape. Your best bet, I think, is just to unwrap and eat it!

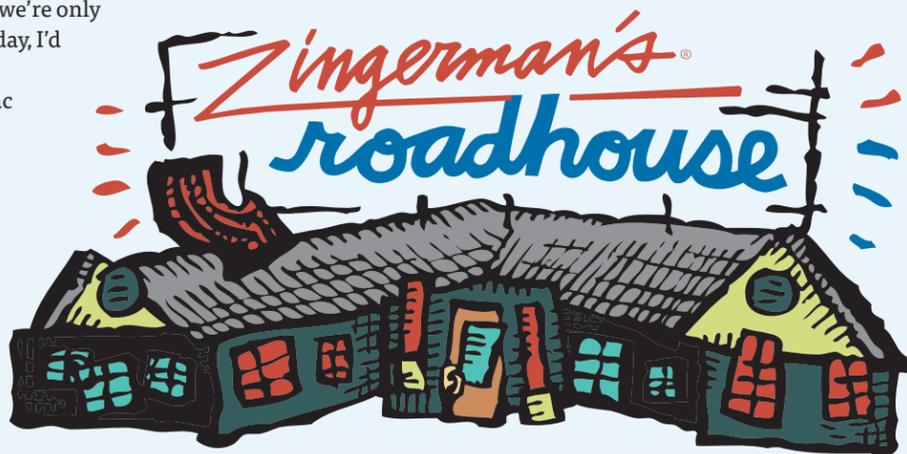
Call ahead to order one to have delivered, or for pick up at the Roadhouse. (You can also just come by and order one on the spot, but since we're only doing a limited number of these every day, I'd order ahead to make sure I got one.)

I ate mine along with some grits, mac and cheese, and mashed potatoes from the Roadhouse as sides. Pulling off pieces by hand makes it easier to get a good ratio of the delicious, peppery dark, smoky skin and the meat, and means you can mix up white meat and dark meat as you like. It's seriously awesome dipped in the Roadhouse's Red Rage barbecue sauce, and is pretty great with our South Carolina mustard sauce, too.

Our whole pit-smoked chicken is easily dinner for two, and I'd say, probably three. (If you don't eat a lot, maybe even four.) Leftovers are also awesome for soup, salad, making into smoked chicken salad, or just nibbling on out of the fridge when you need a snack. The smoked chicken also makes a pretty marvelous chicken club sandwich—just add avocado and mayo to toasted True North bread! Awesome, y'all! Or add bacon. It's also really good on pizza—I add some to the Roadhouse Paesano

pizza before I reheat it when I get home. I took the bones that were left behind and boiled them with an array of vegetables to make some broth, which I later served with some of those amazing alphabet pastas from Rustichella (available from the Deli).

The Roadhouse only smokes a limited number of these whole chickens every day and have been selling out, more often than not, each evening. They come out in time for dinner and it can't hurt to order ahead and have us hold one for you. Remember, you can pick up—or have us deliver—bottles of wine or beer with your Roadhouse orders!



“I would not have  
you descend into  
your own dream.  
I would have you  
be a conscious  
citizen of this  
terrible and  
beautiful world.”

TA-NEHISI COATES

# **An Organization in Black and White**

Grace Lee Boggs once said, "History is not the past. It is the stories we tell about the past. How we tell these stories...has a lot to do with whether we cut short or advance our evolution as human beings." As we all work hard to understand where we have gone so wrong as a community, I've had many conversations with colleagues and friends. In Ms. Boggs' context, this is the story I would tell.

## BY ARI WEINZWEIG

**Racism** is real.

**Racism** is not new.

**Racism** has been a dominant, if not always acknowledged, part of the systems and culture of North America for over five hundred years.

It's very clear from reading history that the economic power of the United States has been built on that system and culture. Given how predominant it has been, given centuries of enslavement, violence, unethical legal codes, quiet and loud discrimination, it honestly can't really be anything but.

When something goes wrong in the Zingerman's Community I take responsibility for it, and immediately get to work on making things better. It doesn't matter whether I'm the one who made the mistake, or whether I "told anyone" to do it incorrectly. I remain responsible. As part of our community here, I approach my role in pretty much the same way. If I'm going to be here, then I am responsible for working to make things better, just as I would do when we serve you a subpar sandwich, or treat a guest rudely or inconsiderately. We are all, I believe, in this together. If I stood by and let you all get a bad experience at Zingerman's, I would be derelict in my duty. I see my responsibility to the community in regard to race, the lack of racial diversity, and systemic exclusion in the same way, both within our own organization and in the community at large.

There's nothing I can think to say here that would remotely come close to showing a full understanding of what's happened to Black people over the centuries on this side of the Atlantic. I don't want to demean the pain and suffering that so many have been put through for so long with some simplistic statement. At the same time, saying nothing at all... may be just as bad. Standing aside when terrible things are happening to human beings is ultimately an act of assent with the actions of others. That was true in Germany in the 1930s, and at any of the thousands of times in history where it's happened. And it's still true today.

The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, and Elijah McClain are horrific. But it's very, very clear that killings like these have been happening for centuries in North America. As Jeffrey Robinson, Deputy Legal Director of the ACLU says, "Our history has been stolen from us." While it's almost never taught in schools, it's all out there for us to study for ourselves. We need to read about the Red Summer of 1919; the thousands of lynchings in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century; the Tulsa Race Massacre on "Black Wall Street" in 1921 and the Rosewood Massacre in Florida in 1923; the killings of Malcolm X, Huey Newton, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, Medgar Evers, and so many others who risked their lives to fight for the equality that was written into the Declaration of Independence in the late 18th century, but blatantly denied to Black people. Go back further to the years of enslavement, selling, killing, dehumanizing. Or to all of the legal actions, Supreme Court decisions, state flags, Civil

War monuments that are such a big part of the historical record of the U.S. None of these are secrets. They're in the headlines, they're in history books, they're openly shared in family stories—both of those who suffered and often those who inflicted the suffering. If we read a bit, it's all right there—in black and white—for all of us to see.

I know that I could never hope to do meaningful justice to five hundred years of injustice in just a few paragraphs. I'm not the one to whom the injustice has been done, and I have no expertise. What I do have is a responsibility to work towards undoing that injustice, to help right what has been wrong for so, so long. And, also, an understanding that—wittingly or not—it is clear that I have benefitted from the deeply rooted systemic and cultural biases, violence, killing, and pain that has been inflicted on so many millions in North America for so long. Those who have been on the other end of that equation have repeatedly paid the price it exacts and extracts for, literally, centuries. Every day, in small ways, and big ways—emotional put-down, threats muttered quietly under someone's breath or through a look in someone's eyes, loud exhortations of rage and hatred, physical intimidation, to the now millions of people who have died.

Starting with me, I believe we can each take meaningful steps by simply treating every single human being we come into contact with—in person, on social media, on the phone, or even when they're not present and in earshot—with dignity and respect until the end of days. By understanding that anyone who's been hurt by all of the above—emotionally, intellectually and/or physically—might benefit from us being even more welcoming, more supportive, more meaningfully caring and collaborative. *And I know that alone is not enough.* By owning that, it's our responsibility to work actively to rebalance a race-based system that's been horribly out of balance for five hundred years. This is a life project which requires as much commitment as anything else meaningful in our lives to which we've committed ourselves. There are significant systems changes to be made, beliefs to be changed, systems to be altered, laws to be rewritten, past wrongs to be righted.

We have long been committed to doing better here at Zingerman's. While we have made some headway and contributed support, insight, and cash to any number of local causes over many years, we also have a long, long way to go to get where we want to be. I can do better. As an organization, we can do better. Our 2032 Vision, our Diversity and Inclusion Statements, our Statement of Beliefs, are all small steps in the right direction. And they set our direction many years ago. But they're only a beginning, a commitment to set our course. The real work is what we have made only a modest headway on. We need to do the work to make this more than just words. Actively working to be more inclusive, building a more diverse organization, helping to support the successful development of ever more success for Black staff members, friends, colleagues, and customers, and community members—young and old,

business owners and non-profit leaders, students and seniors...has long been our work. It remains so today and will remain so for the rest of our lives.

There are a number of things that we have done. None are life-altering. I'm hoping, though, that in the spirit of small steps, taken, on the ground, by an imperfect organization that's trying to get better, they might matter. In the last ten or fifteen years we've

- widely expanded our training on unconscious bias,
- worked to overhaul our application and interviewing process,
- taken "the box" off our job application in the belief that past criminal record is not relevant to future work performance,
- funded a Diversity and Inclusion workgroup (just as we have workgroups for Service, Safety, and other areas of import) to help us make headway,
- hosted an African American Foodways dinner at the Roadhouse for fifteen years now,
- inviting guest speakers from all over the country, chosen to use the Roadhouse wine list to feature wines and wineries run by Black winemakers, people from underrepresented groups, and women,
- actively sponsored the Washtenaw County Juneteenth event for many years now regularly worked with organizations in town like We the People, an internship program with Pathways High School, Growing Hope...
- engaged and hired consultants who focus on diversity and inclusion to teach us,
- run internal focus groups,
- scheduled staff training to roll out this summer around Dr. Jenni Yim's American Dream game,
- and worked to get an internship support program set up with We the People.

I share these not because we're so great. But because although that list looks kind of long when I write it all out, *it's barely scratching the surface of what we need to do.* To some, it may sound like a lot. I know it's really not. As with everything we undertake, we need to deliver results, not just have good intentions. There is nothing we do here at Zingerman's that's yet been "good enough." And many important things on which we must do significantly better.

**The clear truth is that we have barely just begun. We're really just another group of everyday people who have both contributed to the problems at hand and, at the same time, are attempting imperfectly to do better every single day. We know we need to do better. I need to do better. Our success will, as with everything else we do, be measured in our results.**

As Paolo Coehlo said, "The world is changed by your example, not by your opinion."

Ari

# An Organization in Black and White



## Thoughts from Our Diversity & Inclusion Committee

*The Zingerman's Community of Businesses (ZCoB) aspires to be leaders in our community, providing excellent internal and external service, and a great culture around diversity and inclusion.*

The Diversity and Inclusion Committee at Zingerman's is a group of staff, managers, and partners who come together to create initiatives around diversity and inclusion. This is a statement on behalf of the committee highlighting why this work is necessary. Our committee was formed nearly 15 years ago. Ari's article lists some of the activities we've engaged in as we work towards our vision. When we view the ZCoB through a diversity lens here in the year 2020, we can see some areas in which we've made good progress. Gender diversity in leadership, training around bias in hiring, staff partnership opportunities, Open Book management practices and paid attendance at ZCoB huddles, and our pilot Inclusion Assessment Survey model for all Zingerman's businesses. We have positive vendor partnerships and special dinners to amplify other voices. When we take a minute to analyze this list and the work we've done at Zingerman's, we also know that we have a lot more work to do. We recognize that we have minimal racial diversity in leadership, and minimal racial diversity in certain

businesses. There is a lack of racial diversity in our applicant pool, and there can be a heavy business demand that sometimes holds our staff back from professional development and from what we would call "1+1" opportunities which involves committee work, and other work that contributes elsewhere in our organization. Before the pandemic, we began piloting an inclusion assessment survey in one of our biggest and most diverse businesses. We hope to pose it as a model for the rest of the Zingerman's businesses who may follow suit in using the tool to measure their current state of inclusivity.

**Trust, humility, accountability, intersectionality, and ACTION are crucial in dismantling white supremacy. No one will ever get it 100% right, but significant growth and change are possible with commitment.**

SALLIE LOVE & MICHELLE ABBEY, CO-CHAIRS

# A NOTE FROM ZINGERMAN'S CO-FOUNDER PAUL SAGINAW

When Donald Trump stated, "We are at war with a pandemic," he actually spoke truthfully and was only wrong about one part. The war is not against a rogue virus, but it is a war against racism and white supremacy that have replaced the lynching of Black men with chokeholds, gunshots, and knees held on their necks.

The key to understanding how we got here is knowing that policing in America is rooted in the economic machinery of slavery, evolving from the "slave patrols" and Night Watches" that operated specifically to reclaim the property of white slave masters. The unquestioned lynching of Black bodies was the lawless terrorism designed to preserve economic oppression after slavery's abolition. Today terrorism takes place across our nation when Black and Brown people are singled out, arrested, and killed by police officers with immunity resembling that of a lynching mob or Klansmen.

I would warn about judging too quickly the violence and destruction of property. Although it cannot be condoned in isolation, let us examine the roots of it and how long they have been in existence. They are inequities and inhumane treatment from the moment this nation was born, written into our Constitution. James Baldwin wrote about them and Martin Luther King preached about them. Along with the rest of the world, America must now confront every unjust act and every death because they are recorded and shared instantaneously.

To keep society civil, we agree to live within a social contract that preserves order according to agreed-upon rules that are supposed to apply to all parties. Is the rioting a breach of that contract? Let's consider if society has kept its promise to those who are protesting. Has the social contract served them equally? Where is the strength of a contract when those with the responsibility for it and the power over it, operate outside of its rules?

Since early March, as a nation, we have experienced more economic and social hardship than anything since the Great Depression—hunger, housing insecurity, unemployment, illness, death, and tremendous anxiety and uncertainty about the future. The virus has acted as a laser-sharp illuminator of harsh, pre-existing inequities between haves and have-nots in the richest nation on the planet. And now the bright light encompasses the undeniable inequities of policing when wearing a hooded sweatshirt, jogging, or bird-watching in Central Park while Black or Brown appears as

an invitation for police violence and death. The important wake up for those not comprehending this is that this reality is not new for Native people, African Americans, other people of color, immigrants, non-hetero and non-cis-gendered folks, or religious and political minorities.

## **Change must happen and it requires that the social contract serve everyone, not only those born white and with wealth.**

The disproportionate toll of illness and death in Black communities is not the virus discriminating. It is systemic racism that creates permanent poverty, poor health care, poor education, and limited access to resources—every part of the machine that maintains supremacy for those holding onto wealth and power.

Though I am neither an economist or historian, we have an opportunity with our business model that makes me hopeful we can move in the direction of that change. We can become a community of businesses that shares access to wealth and power. We can have managers and partners whose diverse identities enrich their leadership. This is part of our vision. These are ideals put into writing. We are at the very beginning of this work, taking baby steps to interrupt institutional racism, white privilege, and white supremacy within our organization, in all our businesses. It is arduous work needing unrelenting attention. We will work to undo old beliefs and practices and replace them with decolonized beliefs and practices.

The harsh realities of this pandemic and these riots remind us of the urgency to seize this opportunity and double down on all our efforts to transform our organization into the one we desire, that reflects the equitable and just world we long for.

## **A business that maintains neutrality when oppression is shown as robbing people of dignity, opportunity, and life, is colluding with the oppressor and allowing oppressive thinking and practices to persist.**

The Zingerman's Community of Businesses will not collude. We will engage with one another. We will support one another. We will uplift one another and hold each other accountable. That is how we will transform the 20 feet in front of us starting now.

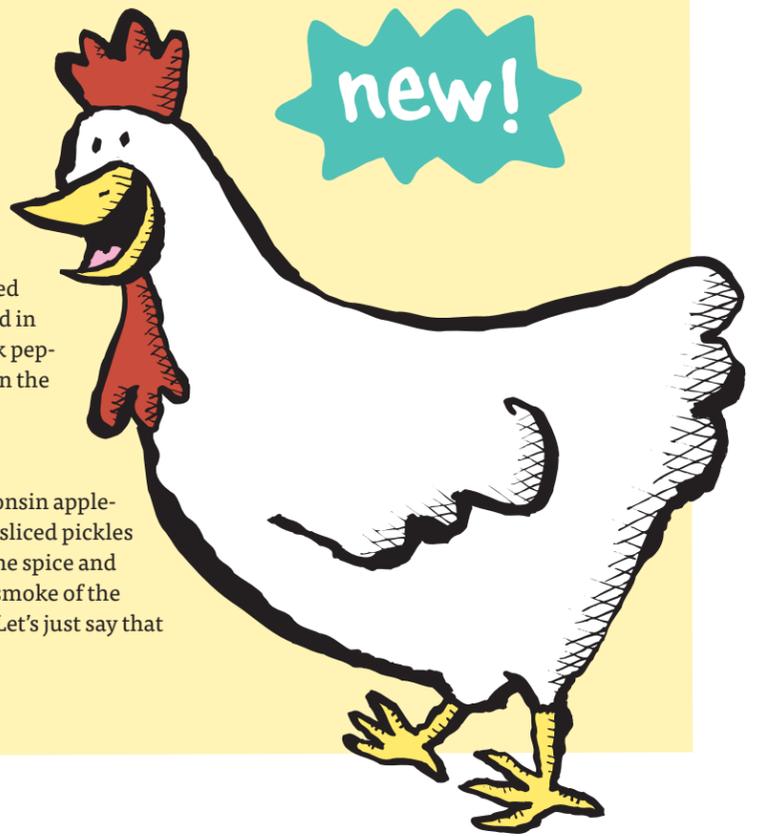


# ROADHOUSE FRIED CHICKEN SANDWICHES

*Flying out the door*

**IN HINDSIGHT,** I'm not sure what took us long to make a fried chicken sandwich. Now that we do, I'm going to eat one regularly to try to make up for lost time. We start with the same super tasty, signature fried chicken folks have come to love from the Roadhouse—Amish-raised chicken, soaked in buttermilk, rolled in flour that's been seasoned with salt, a bit of red pepper, and a whole lot of freshly ground Tellicherry black pepper, finally deep-fried until it gets that crunchy, spicy, savory, light brown crust. The fried chicken has been the biggest selling item on the Roadhouse menu for years now!

For the sandwich, we take a hot-out-of-the-fryer, boneless chicken breast, put it on a lightly grilled Bakehouse challah bun that's generously spread with a New-Mexico-Fire-Roasted-Green-Chile-Ranch dressing. Add a little aged Vermont cheddar cheese, a couple strips of Nueske's Wisconsin applewood smoked bacon, and, last, but not least, the ingredient that takes the sandwich over the top: a pile of sliced pickles from Topor's. The whole thing comes together into one holistically sound, wholly delicious, sandwich. The spice and crunch of the chicken; the cool but spicy tang of the Ranch; the mellowness of the cheese; and the sweet smoke of the bacon, all brought to their best by the contrast with the vinegary vivaciousness of the pickles! Is it good? Let's just say that I've shared one as part of my evening meal regularly. And customers have been raving about them.



# KHMELI SUNELI—GEORGIA'S NOT-SO-SECRET INGREDIENT

*A unique spice blend that can change your day*

**GEORGIA—THE COUNTRY** that lies on the eastern shores of the Black Sea—is a small country, but it has a big culture, especially when it comes to the subject of food and cooking. I've not yet been (and it looks unlikely that I'll get there any time soon), so my writing about this Khmeli Suneli is based mostly on what I've learned from others, with a bit of my own aromatic and culinary experiences over the last few weeks added in as well. My apologies in advance to anyone from Georgia, where Khmeli Suneli seems to be a national icon. One day I promise to go and experience Georgian cooking at its source!

When you open a tin of this new spice blend it might just blow your mind. The colors are beautiful (orange, blue, black, green, and brown spices and herbs); it has the aromatics of a walk through a spice market, and it's a testament to centuries of tradition from a rarely-visited part of the world. The Khmeli Suneli we have at the Deli is coming to us from Ethné and Philippe de Vienne, the Spice Trekkers—and our friends at Épices de Cru up in Montreal. Here's what they have to say on the subject:

"We had a great trip to Georgia last fall. Explored the local spices, markets, and cuisine. Learned to make spice blends with grandmothers. Ate really good food in homes and restaurants. A most successful spice hunt. We also fell in love with the country. The people are generous and welcoming. The culture is ancient and original. The countryside is beautiful; from the semi-tropical seashore of the Black Sea to the 6,000-meter-high Caucasus mountains.

"Khmeli Suneli is to Georgian cuisine what curry is to Indian cookery. There are any number of variations, depending on the region and the recipe in which the blend is used. It's one of the world's great all-purpose blends like India's Madras curry, Ethiopia's Berbere, or America's Cajun spices. It almost always consists of coriander, blue fenugreek, and marigold petals, to which different dried herbs and other spices are added. Ours adds tarragon, black pepper, basil, mint, and savory. It's great in Georgian dishes like the classic kharcho (made with chicken and walnuts) but also does wonders for most savoury meat, fish, or vegetarian dishes."

What makes it so special and seemingly addictive?

"The two uniquely Georgian spices it contains—marigold petals and blue fenugreek seeds—are what give it its unique character. Marigold petals come from the same common flower we have in our gardens. Of course the variety grown in Georgia has been selected for its aroma and colouring property. It is sometimes called "Georgian saffron." To my knowledge Georgian cuisine is the only one that uses it extensively. Blue fenugreek is unique to Georgia and owes its name to the colour of its flowers. It grows in the Caucasus Mountains and is actually kind of unassuming when you taste it alone for the first time. It is only when you taste it in dishes with other spices that you realize that it is the key spice. Somehow it brings all the flavours together. There is no substitute. Together the two create an impression like there is something familiar to make comforting, but exotic enough to make it alluring. The balance of taste and flavours in the blend comes from generations of Georgian grandmothers who have brought to perfection."

The Khmeli Suneli is a bit of magical fairy dust—pretty much everything I've put it on has been enhanced by the addition. I tossed it onto salads. Sprinkled it onto rice. My friend and food writer Molly Stevens says, "I love it on roasted vegetables—it's especially nice on carrots, squash, onions, and cauliflower. It's really good on lamb, too." The Khmeli Suneli is a classic in Georgia to use with walnut sauces (which makes me want to try making spiced walnuts with it). Truth be told, I've been eating it just with bread, dipped first into extra virgin olive oil, then into the spice (sort of like you za'atar or dukkah). Benjamin Kemper, writing for *Saveur*, said, "Since I got back from the Republic of Georgia, I've been sprinkling khmeli suneli on everything, and it's so bewitchingly fragrant." *Saveur's* headline for Kemper's piece sums it all up: "This Secret Weapon Spice Blend From Georgia," it says, "Is Good on Everything."



# CHOCOLATE COVERED CHERRIES & HAZELNUTS FROM SHAWN ASKINOSIE

new!

*Bridge mix for the artisan eater*

**ONE OF THE** phone numbers I've dialed regularly over the last four months, in my effort to stay grounded and gain insight, is the one that connects me to my friend Shawn Askinosie. Every conversation leaves me a bit calmer, feeling more connected to the world, and a bit more knowledgeable. Sometimes I learn about chocolate. Other times about monastic life (he's a lay brother at a monastery). Sometimes it's about the cacao-growing cultures of East Africa or South America.

Shawn and I have been working together for nearly 15 years now. I love his chocolate. I love his work. I'm inspired by all the positive contributions he's made to the community of cacao growers in the producing countries around the world. When I eat his chocolate (which I do often) it reminds me how significant simple and meaningful small bits of culinary beauty can be. One square of his bean-to-bar excellence can reground and remind me that you really *can* taste—and emotionally feel—the difference. The flavors last on the tongue for a long time—by the time they've faded, I'm often notably calmer than I was before I ate it.

Shawn wrote to me the other day, "I always feel better after we talk; even though it's about tough stuff." I couldn't agree more—the therapeutic impact of our interactions works in both directions at the same time. It reminds me of what anarchist geographer Elisée Reclus wrote a century and a half or so ago: "Someday the quest for friendship will replace the quest for material well-being that sooner or later will have been adequately provided for." I'm fortunate to be there now. And I have a feeling Shawn would say the same.

This small piece is a chance to let you know about one of Shawn's great acts of Corona-creativity. This spring Askinosie Chocolate introduced its new Chocolate Covered Cherries & Hazelnuts. As you'll likely have guessed, this is no ordinary bulk-bin Bridge mix. I asked Shawn for some background:

"This is our take on the classic 'Bridge Mix' (a mix of nuts and fruits), with a craft chocolate spin. It's a salty/sweet crunchy/chewy snack that's great for dark and milk chocolate lovers. We use premium dry roasted Duchilly Hazelnuts coated in coconut milk chocolate and organic Bing Cherries coated in Tanzania dark chocolate. Like our best-selling Malt Balls [which are also excellent], we make these by hand in our vintage panning machine by tumbling them for hours in layer upon layer of creamy chocolate. This is a limited edition kosher product—we're only making a select amount over the course of the next several months and when we're out, we're out!"

My mother would have loved the kosher part. I'm more intrigued by the rest of it. I have to admit that I'd not heard of DuChilly hazelnuts. I looked them up. On January 16, 2002, my friend Melissa Clark, in the *New York Times*, described "a little-grown hazelnut variety called DuChilly. Not as commercially viable as the

common round ones that flood the American market, DuChillys have prohibitively low yields and an odd shape that makes them harder to process. Holmquist Hazelnut Orchards in Lynden, Wash., is one of the few farms that cultivates them, as the Holmquist family has been doing for more than 70 years."

The cultivar, it seems, is unique to Washington state. John Holmquist was an immigrant from Finland who left his native country back in 1905 to escape the drudgery of his first job in which he served as a drug store clerk. He and his father found a plot of woodland in Washington state, nearly

at the Canadian border by Vancouver, and set to clearing it for cultivation. In the 1920s, post-Spanish flu, they began growing these special hazelnuts. The Bing Cherry originates from slightly farther south—it was first grown in Milwaukie, Oregon, just south of the Washington state line. The chocolate, a positive nod to the global community, comes from Tanzania. Since Washington was where the pandemic had its most significant initial impact, it seems appropriate to offer up this new mix of long-standing, sustainably-grown products to help soothe our souls and sweeten our palates as we push through the pandemic.

In case you were wondering where "Bridge Mix" comes from, it seems to be a mid-20th century invention. The obvious origin story I found is that it was eaten by card players, since people tend to snack while someone else is shuffling. The more interesting story is that at the Hershey factory in Pennsylvania, bits of candy that fell off the "bridge" on the conveyor belt were all thrown into a single bucket. The inevitable and otherwise incongruous combination of sweet and salty, chocolate and fruit, turned out to be an inside hit! The staff loved it. Later the company started selling it.

Another example of how creative insight and new products can emerge from the strangest places.

The key, of course, is that these new Chocolate Covered Cherries and Hazelnuts taste terrific! So much so that this spring Shawn shared a perfect-for-the-pandemic moment bit of passion: "I really love these, Ari. Hazelnuts and dried cherries are nutritious and when coated in our chocolate they're hard to beat! This is my go-to snack right now while binge-watching *Homeland*!"

In ancient Rome, hazelnut trees were planted to bring future happiness. Today, let's just say that that principle can translate into this new product from Shawn Askinosie—I know it creates happiness in the present and if the ancient Roman legend proves true, then while we eat them, we'll be seeding a small bit more happiness for the future as well.



## 2021 FOOD TOUR SCHEDULE!

*And a hopeful offer to entice you to book now*

**LIKE EVERYONE** in the travel business worldwide, Zingerman's Food Tours was totally grounded by the pandemic. But looking to the future, both managing partner Kristie Brablec and many of her most loyal clients have taken the view that booking tours for 2021 now is a way to make a positive statement of hope for the future: "No one can be sure what will be going on next year, but we're hopeful we can make them happen in good form. Our tours help to support so many artisan food producers, family owned hotels, and wineries. The impact of the pandemic on all of them has been huge. We've been working for months to come up with ways to make travel safe, but still tasty and educational. When we emerge from this time, we will be ready to travel!"

Kristie has made a special offer for our readers: "For the first 10 people to book a tour this month, we'll take 10 percent off of everything folks put down as a deposit. So if they put down \$2000, we take off \$200 from the final price of the tour. If they put down the whole \$10,000 now, they'll save \$1000." In addition, to build on the theme of hope for the future, for every booking, Zingerman's Food Tours will gift

\$100 to We the People Growers Association in Ypsilanti. All of which seeds hope for the future on multiple fronts. As the 20th century Chinese philosopher Lin Yutang once said, "Hope is like a road in the country: there was never a road, but when many people walk on it, the road comes into existence."

### **Here's what we're excited for in early 2021:**

Israel March 4–10, 2021

Hungary April 19–28, 2021

Sicily, Italy May 3–13, 2021

Lyon & Jura, France May 16–24, 2021

Mallorca, Spain May 21–29, 2021

Piedmont, Italy May 30–June 6, 2021

Basque, Spain June 5–13, 2021

**Want to tap this special offer?  
Use the discount code  
HOPEFULNESS**

# “A HUMBLE, ANARCHISTIC INQUIRY INTO HUMILITY”

A new pamphlet release from Zingerman's Press

**IT FELT A BIT** strange to even consider speaking at a symposium on the subject of humility. When I got the invitation I kind of had to laugh and wonder a bit. For starters, I didn't feel at all qualified—I've read a lot of leadership books in my life, and written half a dozen of my own, but I hadn't spent even half an hour studying humility. And, secondly, the whole concept struck me sort of strange—speaking in public about the importance of humility, which by definition is about keeping the spotlight off of oneself, seemed like a contradiction in terms. I'm pretty sure I'd have politely said “No, thank you” if the symposium wasn't being run by someone I knew—Jamie Vanderbroek, a very kind and generous former Zingerman's staffer, who's married to Izaak Vanderbroek, an equally kind and generous manager at the Deli. So, strange as it seemed, uncomfortable as I felt, I took a deep breath and said, “Yes.” Of course, *agreeing* to speak was only the start. Committing to teaching about a subject one knows little or nothing about is a self-chosen challenge to start studying. Since the request came in the spring, and the conference wasn't until October, I had about six months to put together some thoughts. Unsure of what I would say, I decided to initiate my investigation in the spirit of the very wise business writer Peter Drucker, who once said, “My greatest strength as a consultant is to be ignorant and ask a few questions.” Drucker's colleague, Dr. Edgar Schein, from whose work I've learned so much over the years, expands on the thought: “Humble Inquiry,” he says, “is the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you do not already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person.” Schein's suggestion seemed the ideal approach for the talk. Except in this case, the curiosity and interest were on the subject of humility. The questions that follow are the ones I used to frame my talk; my own humble inquiry into humility. The answers, sidebars, and conclusions are a combination of what I shared with the audience at the event, and what I've continued to learn in the months that followed. I hope they're of some help to you. They have been, I know, *very helpful* for me. Awkward though it felt at the time, I'm glad that I agreed to take on the challenge.

Two years and a couple of crises later, what started as an awkward and uncomfortable commitment to speak at a small conference about a subject I knew nothing about, has turned into 24 months of study, a whole lot of learning, a bunch of new beliefs, some practical techniques to put to work in my personal life and at Zingerman's. In addition to all that, we have a 45-page pamphlet coming out this summer. When I started looking into it, I couldn't have put together two paragraphs on the subject a few years ago. Today, I would tell you that humility plays a critical role in our personal development. It's a hallmark of those who are leading healthy sustainable organizations and those who are living rewarding, sustainable lives. And perhaps most crucially, humility is a skill that can be learned and practiced.

We are at our most meaningfully, caringly, and constructively human when we are effectively grounded in humility. Does humility have much value when the country is in crisis? It won't cure coronavirus. But, honestly, it might well have altered the way we as a nation have—and will, still—respond. If you look at the countries that have handled the situation most effectively, there is a good bit of evidence to support that statement. Humility leads us to be more open to the input and help of others. It makes it easier to meaningfully say, “I don't know.” It increases the likelihood that we will own our responsibility for our errors. It improves the odds we will take the advice of experts who know more than we do seriously, even while

*“It is only on the condition of humility and reverence before the world that our species will be able to remain in it.”*

WENDELL BERRY

still making our own decisions (and sometimes, respectfully going against what the experts' advise). Humility makes it more difficult to be curt and dismissive. More difficult to be curtly dismissed. And harder

to say, “I don't care.” If we weren't humble before the pandemic presented itself last winter, Coronavirus provided a hard-to-ignore reminder of just how little influence any of us actually have over what happens in the world. Pandemics are one of the most humbling things nature can throw at us. At the end of the day, nature will do what nature will do, and if we make our relationship with nature into a conflict, in the long run it will be nature, not us, that comes out ahead. As Masanobu Fukuoka wrote, “If we throw mother nature out the window, she comes back in the door with a pitchfork.”

Will humility have an impact on our other recovery? The rebuilding of trust and mutual respect after 5 centuries of systemic and cultural bias around race? I believe it would absolutely help. When we approach the world from a place of humility, it makes it much more likely that we will own our own part in creating the problem; acknowledge our shortfalls, to ask for help; understand that none of us have all the answers and accept the answers we've collectively been working with aren't working . . .

Without the humility to do those things, we will not come out of this current crisis in a positive way. Humility, by definition, means that no human is better, or worse, than anyone else. It means that we steer clear of the belief that brilliant heroes are going to swoop in and save us. It means that we honor the uniqueness, insight, and value of every person we come into contact with. It pushes us away from the hierarchical thinking and assignment of dehumanizing group identities which are so commonly assumed to be correct that they generally pass unacknowledged. Humility leads us to learn from others, to look for the wisdom in what people we might not agree with at first are saying. If we're going to change the way we relate to each other to create a healthier and more welcoming national ecosystem, humility has to be part of how we approach the world.

Humility won't win big headlines. It waits quietly in the wings. Mozart once said: “The music is not in the notes, but in the silence between.” Humility—humbleness—fits into that frame. It's the space between the sounds. The whisper between the words. The energy between the egos. Humility, in that context, is both ethereal and essential. Like great music, it's hard to measure and often goes unnoticed by casual listeners. But if we “listen” closely, we start with the beauty that humbleness brings to the world. Musician and writer Ron Drotos says, “It's not always a literal silence, is it? Each note is usually still ringing out before the next one is played, right? But yes, something is happening that relates to silence. You're listening to the silence.” The soon-to-be-released pamphlet posits that there is a lot to be learned from that “silence.” That the silence is blended in with what we say—and how we say it. Marcel Marceau, who silently mimed his way through an amazing and creative career, said, “Music and silence combine strongly because music is done with silence, and silence is full of music.” In that context, my hope is that the humble, anarchistic inquiry into humility in this new pamphlet will offer you ideas and insights on how to bring the “music” and the “silence” of life together, in the interest of helping us all live more meaningfully rewarding lives and more be ever more effective leaders.

## VIRTUAL BAKE! CLASSES OPEN ONLINE



**WHEN THE** pandemic hit, one immediate casualty was the packed class schedule at BAKE!, Zingerman's nationally-renowned school for home bakers. Within a few weeks, the crew at the Bakehouse had turned forced closure into connection—classes that have been lovingly held at the BAKE! classrooms on Plaza Drive went up online. The staff at BAKE! have adjusted their methods to make the classes available around the globe. How's it working? Ashley Chicatelli, from Akron, Ohio, shared her experience of taking the classes with her daughter:

“I treated myself during the quarantine to online baking classes. It has been so much fun doing this with Audrey! We have taken cake-making, pies, and croissants. This week is pizza. Scones and homemade graham crackers & marshmallows are next. Zingerman's has always been very near and dear to my heart and to have this online opportunity has been amazing. The instructors are great and you do not have to be an experienced baker.”

Book soon—with the national boom in home baking over the last four months, the online BAKE! classes are selling out just as quickly as the in-person versions!

**Hurray for Challah!**  
**Friday, July 17, 2020**  
**9am-1:30pm**

**SEE MORE CLASSES AT [BAKEWITHZING.COM](http://BAKEWITHZING.COM)**



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